



WESTSIDE
SCHOOL

Attendance Policy

Policy Written By:
Ratified By:
Review Date:

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INTRODUCTION

Westside School is committed to providing a full, effective and efficient education to all students (The Education Act 1996 Part 1, Section 7) and embraces the concept of equal opportunities for all. We will endeavour to provide an environment where all students feel valued and welcome.

Regular school attendance is vital for all students, but especially so for those who come to our setting. This point is stressed to all pupils and parents when they are first admitted to the school.

Since the students we cater for are usually non-attenders or have specific learning or behavioural difficulties, we need them to be in school every day if we are to help them achieve their full potential and re-integrate successfully into mainstream education. Regular attendance is also a good habit to acquire in secondary school; hopefully, they will become reliable employees in the world of work later.

For a student to reach their full educational achievement, a high level of school attendance is essential. We will consistently work towards a goal of 100% attendance for all students. Every opportunity will be used to convey to students and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance.

The students at Westside School are aged between 11 and 16, and a significant number have EHCPs. Their problems may include:

1. Difficulty with acquiring literacy and/or numeracy skills
2. Organisational problems
3. Poor memories
4. Visual and/or auditory problems
5. Poor spatial awareness, sequencing difficulties and problems with time
6. Gross/fine motor skill problems (Dyspraxia)
7. Attention and/or hyperactivity disorders
8. Autistic Spectrum Condition
9. Emotional/behavioural difficulties
10. Social Communication Difficulties

Our pupils need to attend school every day in order to provide continuity, reinforcement and stimulation to assist their learning and so enable them to overcome their difficulties and return to mainstream education. The main features of our teaching methods are as follows:

- A holistic student approach
- Carefully structured, individual timetables
- Regular periods of reinforcement
- The use of precision teaching techniques
- Confidence building
- Ample opportunities for success and praise, thus raising self-image

At Westside School, Leaders and all staff:

- have high expectations for every pupil's attendance at school.
- set expectations about attendance from the outset.
- explain to parents and pupils why good attendance is important and how it helps pupils to achieve.
- listen to parents carefully to find out why their children are not attending well enough so that they can act accordingly.
- challenge parents who do not make sure that their children attend, but also offer support where needed.
- have the right people in place to have these conversations with parents.
- ensure that attendance is always recorded accurately.
- systematically analyse attendance information so that they can see patterns and trends.
- use this analysis to target their actions, both for individuals, specific micro-populations and cohorts, and at a whole-school level.
- make sure that attendance is 'everyone's business' in school.
- understand that good attendance does not happen in isolation, there is an interrelationship between attendance and the quality of the school's curriculum, ethos, behaviour and inclusivity.
- do not stop pushing for whole-school improvement, once attendance regardless of where it stands relative to the national average.
- see the process of securing good attendance for all pupils as an ongoing process, never something that is 'finished'.

- secure support from relevant external agencies to maximise impact on improving attendance.

This policy contains the procedures that the school will use to meet its attendance targets.

SCHOOL PROCEDURES

Any student who is absent from school at the morning or afternoon registration period must have their absence recorded as being authorised, unauthorised or as an approved educational activity.

Only the headteacher or a member of staff acting on their behalf can authorise absence. If there is no known reason for the absence, then the absence must be recorded in the first instance as unauthorised.

PUNCTUALITY/LATENESS

It is essential that all students are on time for school: 9:10 am. The registers will remain open for 20 minutes. Any student arriving late to school in the morning will remain behind on the same day for late detention. In cases, for example, where the absence at registration was for attending an early morning medical appointment, the appropriate authorised absence code will be entered.

Students arriving after the start of school but before the end of the registration period will be treated for statistical purposes, as present, but will be coded as late before registers close.

Persistent lateness will result in the removal of lunchtime privileges; meetings with parents and carers, and ultimately can lead to the place being withdrawn.

FIRST DAY ABSENCE

Parents/Carers will be expected to contact the school office and leave a message stating the name of the student and the reason for absence. If a call has not been received by

09:30 am, an administrator will contact the parent/carer to establish the reason for absence. This information will be relayed to the person responsible for each class register to record as required.

A text message will be sent from the Student Information System to parents whom the school has been unable to contact.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE IN TERM TIME

Families do not have a right to take their children out of school for family holidays or trips abroad during term time. Government guidance instructs Headteachers **NOT** to authorise leave of absence in term time except in the most exceptional circumstances.

Requests for leave of absence during term time should be made to the Headteacher in writing. Each request will be judged on a case-by-case basis.

MAINTAINING GOOD ATTENDANCE

We are convinced that giving regular attendance such a high priority in school will encourage pupils to attend regularly. Making students feel happy, secure, appreciated and cared for should also help.

A positive approach is taken towards regular attendance. Students who consistently attend and are punctual are presented as exemplars, and those who are making efforts to improve their attendance and punctuality are recognised for their efforts. This is achieved through the awarding of 'Pride of Westside' certificates, which are issued:

- Every week at Assembly. These are given to students for a variety of reasons, including good performance in specific subjects, attendance and punctuality.
- At the end of every half term, students also receive £10.00 gift vouchers for attendance and punctuality.
- Where students improve on personal attendance or behaviour after being of some concern, individual rewards may be given. E.g. pens, books, gift vouchers, or an invitation to participate in reward trips or activities. Parents/carers are informed, to

communicate that we recognise and value their support and contribution to the achievement.

- Praise and acknowledgement are important tools in encouraging those who have the appropriate good or excellent attendance to continue to maintain that. They are also effective in communicating our recognition of those students who have or are improving their attendance and punctuality, however, slightly. Staff are encouraged to miss no opportunity to issue deserved and meaningful praise.

HAVING THE RIGHT PEOPLE IN PLACE

Effective engagement between parents/carers and school often leads to improved attendance, and can also be linked to higher academic achievement, and to a positive effect on pupils'/students' attitude to learning and on their behaviour.

We recognise that there is a persistent need to find improved ways to communicate and support parents, and to make communication between parents and ourselves more timely, efficient, and productive.

Parents/carers who are hard to reach are often those that we need to have more contact with, and we understand that their reluctance to engage may be due to their own experience of school, or because they have difficulty communicating, for example, their own low literacy skills, their understanding of the English language or cultural differences. These may also be reasons why parents do not contact the school, either to report and talk about the reason for their child's absence and to seek support, or because they are not aware of the school's expectations.

We have a dedicated and skilled family engagement officer who is proactive in getting to the root of the problem, and whose primary role and focus is to improve attendance, working with support agencies and organisations, monitoring and analysing student attendance and punctuality data, and working with school leaders to respond to what the data tells us.

PERSISTENT ABSENCE

Pupil absence is monitored regularly, and parents receive daily phone calls and texts at home if the student is not at school.

Pupils with specific medical, therapy or Special Educational needs, who have a high level of absence, will be supported by the following strategies:

- Daily monitoring of attendance and absence.
- Recording absence as authorised, where appropriate.
- Working with the local authority to record such absences as authorised to reflect attendance as 'as good as can be expected' for these pupils in the school.
- Provide home visits where appropriate.
- Where appropriate, provide home learning or remote learning opportunities.
- Recognise that some pupils are not 'available for learning' and work with the LA and other agencies to allocate appropriate provision which may not be within our school.

A WELCOME BACK

It is important that on return from an absence, all pupils are made to feel welcome. This should include ensuring that the pupil is helped to adjust to the school's daily routine, catch up on missed work and brought up to date on any information that has been passed to the other pupils.

ATTENDANCE TARGETS

The school will set attendance targets each year. A system for analysing performance towards the targets will be established, and the Head Teacher will be responsible for overseeing this work.

Our school target is: 85%

THE REGISTRATION SYSTEM

The School will use the MIS Arbor for keeping the school attendance records. The following national codes will be used to record attendance information.

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
B	Educated off-site (NOT Dual registration)	Approved Education Activity
C	Other Authorised Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)	Authorised Absence
D	Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending other establishment)	Approved Education Activity
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised Absence
F	Extended family holiday (agreed)	Authorised Absence
G	Family holiday (NOT agreed or days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised Absence
H	Family holiday (agreed)	Authorised Absence
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorised Absence
J	Interview	Approved Education Activity
L	Late (before registers closed)	Present
M	Medical/dental appointments	Authorised Absence
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised Absence
O	Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description)	Unauthorised Absence

P	Approved sporting activity	Approved Education Activity
R	Religious observance	Authorised Absence
S	Study leave	Authorised Absence
T	Traveller absence	Authorised Absence
U	Late (after registers closed)	Unauthorised Absence
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved Education Activity
W	Work experience	Approved Education Activity
X	Untimetabled sessions for non-compulsory school-age pupils	Not Counted in Possible Attendances
Y	Enforced closure	Not Counted in Possible Attendances
Z	Pupil not yet on roll	Not Counted in Possible Attendances
#	School closed to pupils	Not Counted in Possible Attendances

Registers by law must be kept for at least 3 years.